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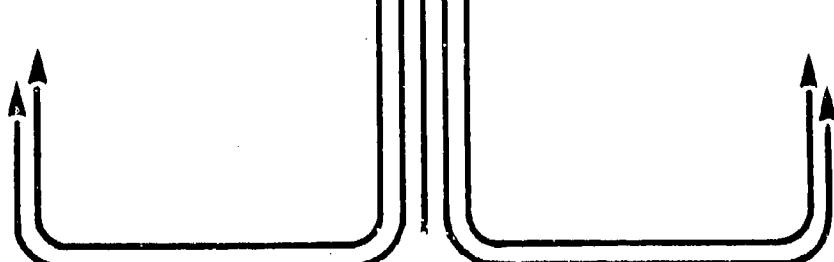
GREAT WARRIORS OF WORLD WAR II  
ADMIRAL ERNEST J. KING  
ADMIRAL CHESTER W. NIMITZ

MAJOR GARY I. BARNES

84-180

*"insights into tomorrow"*

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TITLE GREAT WARRIORS OF WORLD WAR II  
ADMIRAL ERNEST J. KING  
ADMIRAL CHESTER W. NIMITZ

AUTHOR(S) MAJOR GARY I. BARNES

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Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of  
requirements for graduation.

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE  
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## PREFACE

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor quickly brought the United States into World War II. But planning for the war did not start at that time. Military planners began years earlier preparing to fight a war in the Pacific. By 1941, strategists had developed a clear plan to defeat the enemy. The only problem was that the unexpected happens and plans and strategy must be improvised. The purpose of this paper is to analyze American Naval strategy in the Pacific for the first six months of the war and show what factors influenced it.

Much has been written about the Pacific theater of World War II. Memoirs, biographies and works of professional historians all record what actually happened. Recently declassified documents have shed further light on why specific actions took place. I have tried to draw from many of these sources to reconstruct an unbiased interpretation, if there is such a thing.

I wish to thank Commander Joseph Lang for his guidance and insight into Navy doctrine and the support needed to complete this project. My fascination in history is only beginning.



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Major Gary I. Barnes was commissioned at Officer Training School on 2 Nov 1971. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Ag Business from South Dakota State University in 1971 and a Master of Arts degree in Business Management from Webster College, St. Louis, Missouri in 1978.

Major Barnes attended undergraduate navigation training in 1972 and was assigned to KC-135 crew duties. His assignments included squadron instructor navigator, standardization-evaluation navigator, wing navigator and wing scheduler. He subsequently spent three years on Guam as an operations planner and briefer for the Pacific Tanker Task Force, 43rd Strategic Wing. His professional military education includes attendance at Squadron Officer School and Air Command and Staff College in residence.

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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND

By the time the Japanese attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor, many Americans realized that we were being drawn slowly into the war. But America had focused on Europe and the plight of Great Britain instead of the peril of the Rising Sun. The attack on Pearl harbor had taken all of America completely by surprise. Military leaders were equally surprised by the swiftness of the attack but not by the fact that we were going to war against Japan along with Germany.

Well before 1941, the Navy had thoroughly studied the problem of waging a war against Japan. Class after class at the Naval War College studied the strategy for defeating Japan as a class project. These projects or plans were called Orange War Plans, named after the color given to the Japanese Navy during these studies. The Navy, working jointly with the Army, came up with the first Orange Plans in March 1924. These first war plans were concerned mainly with an offensive war. However, in 1937 the plans developed a defensive nature. They sought to maintain a defense in the eastern Pacific and to seek economic pressure to accomplish Japan's collapse. By 1938, joint Navy and Army planners, called the Joint Board (JB), realized that if the United States were drawn into a war, all three powers, namely Germany, Japan and Italy, may have to be fought at once. The Orange Plans were deemed inadequate because they considered only one

enemy. Nevertheless, they had served their purpose by laying down a wealth of planning information about a possible war with Japan. (3:4-7)

Because of the inadequacies of the Orange Plans, the Joint Board developed war plans that hypothetically fought one or more enemies with varying allies. These plans were called the Rainbow Plans. Rainbow-5 was in effect when the Japanese attacked. These plans were strategic plans rather than operating ones. Operating plans and plans for specific operations had to be accomplished when war actually broke out. Rainbow-5 was actually on the grand strategy level of planning. It pointed out the general direction the war should take but it did not explain actually how Japan or Germany would be defeated. Actions of the enemies would determine what operations to undertake.

Even as the Joint Board was developing the Rainbow Plans, America came closer and closer to war. By 1940, many military leaders saw the likelihood of war. Congress had passed the Two Ocean Navy Bill, authorized the procurement of thousands of planes plus equipment, and passed the Selective Service Act for more men to defend the country. (3:8) Because events were worsening, the foundation for our national policy and objectives developed gradually. Above all, our national interests required that Great Britain must survive and that its post-war freedom of action as a great power must be maintained. (2:3) Because of this underlying national interest, American strategy evolved through Great Britain well before we entered the war. We had agreed with Britain in early 1940 that if war came, the ultimate defeat of Germany was of utmost importance and Japan should be defeated only after Germany's downfall. Underlying this "Germany first" objective was the strategy that complete defeat of the

enemy was assumed. This total war concept of unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan was never questioned. It was implicit in all our joint planning undertakings. (2:4-5)

From this well defined national objective at the beginning of World War II, American and British planners developed a grand strategy to defeat the enemy. Because the British were much more concerned with events in Europe, they had no choice but to leave the majority of Pacific Theatre strategy formulation to the Americans. Admiral Ernest J. King and Admiral Chester W. Nimitz were major actors in this strategy formulation process for the Pacific War against Japan. This paper describes the contributions each man made to the strategy process in the Pacific for the first six months of the war. It reviews and analyzes the strategies of both men and how they arrived at them. They acted at different levels in the military structure but affected each other significantly. This analysis should provide insight into the application of strategy and the actual process by which it is derived.

Chapter Two introduces Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King in a brief biographical summary and presents in detail his part in formulating strategy for the first six months in the Pacific War. The focus of this chapter is on grand strategy formulation in Washington and normal constraints to it. Also of importance is King's contribution to military strategy at the fleet level, which will be addressed briefly. Chapter Three introduces Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. A brief review of Nimitz's career precedes his contributions to military strategy for the defeat of Japan at the fleet level. Also, grand strategy formulation through Admiral King was an important aspect of Nimitz's career. The concluding chapter sum-

marizes the strategies of King and Nimitz in the context of the ACSC strategy process model. Both men worked at different levels in the strategy process but greatly affected strategy at all levels. They combined their talents to overcome an awesome enemy and to become the most successful strategists the world has ever seen. The lessons learned from these two great warriors are great indeed. Their history provides insight into the strategy process and the evolution of military strategy for ages to come.

## Chapter Two

### ERNEST J. KING

#### BIOGRAPHY

Ernest J. King was born on 23 November 1878, in Lorain, Ohio, only one hundred yards from Lake Erie. He acquired an early interest in the sea because his father had worked in shipping on Great Lakes schooners. When King was 10, he read an article in the Youth's Companion concerning the United States Naval Academy. The Academy greatly appealed to him and he confided in his father his desire to go. Appointment to the Academy was highly competitive and was secured by examinations. Only one appointment came to each congressional district every six years. He won the competition and received the appointment to the Class of 1901, starting class in the Fall of 1897. (4:9-15)

The entire battalion of the Naval Academy, consisting of 290 naval cadets, was put into disarray by the Spanish-American War that broke out in April 1898. Because of Naval officer shortages, seniors graduated immediately and left for the War. The class of 1899 was ordered to sea for the whole summer and because of inexperience, the other two classes were ordered home for summer leave. However, due to his enthusiasm for the war, King and a few others wrangled orders to sea and eventually saw action in Havana harbor when his ship was fired upon. (4:16-23)

King excelled at the Academy and was named to the highest military position in the battalion his senior year. As battalion commander with four stripes, he commanded the entire midshipmen corps. Of the sixty-seven in the class of 1901, King ended up fourth overall. (4:30-21) King was popular with his classmates, was active in class activities and was considered a loyal, responsible team player. (1:10)

After graduation, King entered the navy as a midshipman eligible for promotion to ensign after two years. His military career was diverse to say the least. He served as a navigator on a survey ship, two battleships, and a cruiser, in addition to engineering officer on one battleship. As a young officer, he saw much of the world including Europe, the Mediterranean, Japan, the Philippines, China, and the Caribbean. He spent three years as a military history expert at the Naval Academy and a year as secretary and treasurer of the United States Naval Institute. Admiral Osterhouse, as Chief Atlantic Fleet, chose King to be his flag secretary for over three years. King's first command came as a Lt. Commander on the destroyer Terry in 1914. He thereafter commanded other destroyers, a supply ship, a submarine division, the submarine base at New London, an aircraft tender, an aircraft scouting fleet, the U.S. Naval Air Station, Norfolk, Va., and the aircraft carrier Lexington. King attended the Naval War College very late in his career. In fact, he was the senior naval officer present. After becoming a rear admiral in 1933, he served as Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics; commanded the Aircraft, Base Force and the Aircraft, Scouting Force. As Vice Admiral, he commanded the Aircraft, Battle Force also known as the Carrier Command. But at that point, August 1939, his career seemed to be over. He reverted to his permanent

rank of rear admiral and was assigned to the General Board, a group of senior officers who acted as advisors to the Secretary of the Navy. (4: 35-295)

But history changes many careers, as it did with Admiral King. The Nazi spector and the prospects of WWII brought attention to King's vast naval experience. President Roosevelt reorganized the Navy into the Pacific Fleet under Admiral Kimmel, the Asiatic Fleet under Admiral Hart, and the Atlantic Fleet under Admiral King. King assumed command as CINC, Atlantic Fleet, on 22 Jan 1941 in a four star billet. After Pearl Harbor, the Navy again underwent a massive reorganization and Admiral King assumed command of the entire U.S. Fleet. Later, on 26 Mar 1942, King assumed, in addition to his current duties, the role of Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). He reported directly to the President himself. (4:295)

King had finally made it to the top of his profession, but it had not come easy. He had stumbled along the way and had made a lot of enemies. He had earned a reputation for brilliance, toughness, and harshness. Many considered him cold, aloof, and humorless; yet others who were close to him liked him very much. He was completely intolerant of stupidity, inefficiency, and laziness and, could be ruthless to the point of firing people on the spot. (6:31) Even early in his career his fitness reports noted a tempestuous behavior, a stubborn belligerence, and an arrogant insubordination. However, these adverse statements were outweighed by his other fine accomplishments, and he always seemed to be promoted on time. (1:24) In fact, his entire career seemed to be a series of contradictions. At times he was both cruel and loving, both immoral and ethical. Nevertheless, King was an ambitious, professional Naval officer.

His fearlessness and perseverance carried the Navy and the Nation through the worst war of the century. Above all, in the true sense of the word, he was a great warrior. (1:xx)

#### GRAND STRATEGY FORMULATION

The introduction referred to the fact that our national objectives and grand strategy were in place by the time we entered the war. United States Naval leaders expected to use the fleet aggressively. They had planned to head directly for the Marshalls and Carolines to divert the Japanese and open up the way for relief of the Philippines. But because of the massive destruction that took place at Pearl Harbor, these plans were cancelled in favor of just protecting U.S. positions. Rainbow-5 was implemented and immediately amended to confine activities to cover and hold the line of communications between the U.S. and Australia. The primary mission was the security of Hawaii. The Fleet was bolstered by adding three battleships, one carrier, nine destroyers, twelve old submarines, and thirty-six patrol bombers from the Atlantic. The Navy initially assumed a defensive posture. (3:28)

As the world watched America enter the war, the British headed for Washington for a series of conferences known as the Arcadia Conferences. The British wanted to strengthen U.S. ties and plan overall strategy for the war. Allied Headquarters was set up at Washington. The first Joint Chiefs of Staff, composed of Generals Marshall and Arnold, and Admirals King and Stark, met frequently with the Combined British Staff together with Roosevelt and Churchill. They decided grand strategy and other crucial matters affecting the war. (1:169)

The strategy formulation process that evolved was colored by the

larger international and domestic political process. The leaders of both countries were so single-minded and concentrated so much on the politico-military effects of the first offensive, that immediate results of the operation received hasty considerations. The men involved were confronted with the overall economic and logistics dilemma of matching a scarcity of men and materials to a number of theaters worldwide. They became embroiled in a complex, confused debate that centered on the political process. (9:180) The British were afraid that the U.S. would reverse the "Germany first" decisions made earlier in 1941. The Arcadia Conference affirmed the "Germany first" principle but because of the massive destruction at Pearl Harbor and the need to maintain a defensive posture, some forces had to be diverted from the Atlantic war effort. The forces destined for the Pacific were left as "a matter of mutual discussion." (3:42) This issue raised a serious rift between the Army planners and the Navy.

The Navy, led by Admiral King, believed that the most urgent and immediate problem was that of stemming the rapid Japanese offensive. The Japanese were strong and moving rapidly toward total Pacific domination. The Navy's view was that if they couldn't stop the Japanese somewhere in the Western Pacific, Japanese domination would continue through Midway, Hawaii and eventually to the west coast of the United States itself.

The Army, on the other hand, led by Marshall and Arnold, wanted to put only enough forces in the Pacific to defend the Hawaii-Australia line of communication. They believed the key to the war was a massive build up for the defeat of Germany in the Atlantic and then, and only then, could the Navy start on the offensive in the Pacific.

The British wanted the best of both worlds. They wanted the U.S. to provide the Indian Ocean and Singapore with more ships to protect their interests only as long as we didn't decrease our efforts to supply Britain with supplies for the defeat of Germany. At least the U.S. Army and Navy agreed on this part of U.S. strategy. No ships nor additional aircraft could be spared to go directly to the Indian Ocean. It was considered a lost cause. (3:105)

The entire problem centered around the fact that the U.S. suffered from an acute lack of shipping capability. King's concern for this lack of shipping is reflected in a letter written to the Honorable Carl Vinson, Chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs on 10 Jan 1942. King wrote:

...I feel that I can say to you that 1942 seems to me to be the critical year for our cause. We must turn out every plane and ship and accompanying munitions that the present production capacity of the country is capable of. In my opinion, every existing means of war production should be brought up to a twenty-four hour basis....(4:373)

This lack of equipment prevented the accomplishment of both the Army and Navy tasks in both oceans at the same time. To complicate matters, the Army didn't like the wartime coalition planning among several powers. They weren't sure what they wanted, but they didn't want to dilute their powers between the U.S. Navy in the Pacific and the overall British command in the Atlantic. (5:20)

The grand strategy debate between the Army and Navy continued until May 1942. The rhetoric increased and no one was backing down. Finally, the question was brought to the President for solution. As it turned out, the Army had the President's ear. General Marshall, as chief of staff of the Army, was the President's principal military advisor. The Army sought to limit the Pacific operations because they saw the real threat coming

from Germany. Marshall was totally committed to a landing in Northwest Europe. The Army actually controlled Pacific military strategy by denying troops, aircraft and shipping for operations that they considered unnecessary. They wanted to limit the Pacific defense to Hawaii and Alaska. Only with Presidential persuasion did they relent to continue the defense of the lines of communication to Australia. (5:195-6) The Army won out. The President was firm in that the Atlantic operation was not to be slowed down. He did not favor increasing Pacific strength. The Navy and King were highly dissatisfied.

In essence, the President had reinforced the grand strategy decisions made a year earlier, before the U.S. was at war. Now the Navy would have to lick its wounds and prepare to build for the eventual offensive actions after the defeat of Germany. But Admiral King saw a way out. Even while the debate was raging, he committed his carriers into action on the guise of protecting the lines of communications to Australia. His strategy was to deny the Japanese strategically vital islands that gave the Japanese a foothold. And secondly, he wanted to use those same islands as staging bases. He intended to use aircraft carriers to keep the enemy off balance while he worked at obtaining needed men and equipment. He called this strategy the "defensive-offensive." (5:201)

As events transpired, Admiral King saw the opportunity to hit the Japanese hard by massing U.S. forces at known Japanese objectives. By using the fleet in a defensive attack role, he solved the Navy's problem of limited resources. He also by-passed the "Germany first" position of the Combined Staff, the Joint Staff and the President. The unbelievable victory at Midway solved the defensive strategy problem, but it was not because of Army assistance.

One last point must be made about strategy formulation. The reasons for strategy formulation may not always be related to military objectives. For example, the U.S. press and public, unaware of the extent of damage at Pearl Harbor, clamored for U.S. Navy action. This put the Navy and Admiral King under great pressure to act against the Japanese Fleet. Admiral Nimitz stated this on 21 Feb 1942 in the CINCPAC Greybook, the war diary of Plans Division. "...we may be forced to make the move (to the South Pacific) due to the political or desperation strategical considerations." (5:53) Early raids ordered by King turned out to be important for Navy and public morale, but they did not substantially hurt the Japanese other than to limit the extent of Japanese conquest in the Pacific. (3:82)

#### AFFECT ON MILITARY STRATEGY FORMULATION

Since military strategy evolves from grand strategy, restrictions on grand strategy, such as economic and political restraints, limit military strategy formulation as well. Since the Army and the rest of the JCS could not be convinced of the importance of Pacific activity, King took the initiative by ordering what fleet he had into action. He believed that 1942 would be a year of hold and build "the defensive-offensive"--"hold what you've got and hit them when you can." (4:373) He believed that the U.S. Fleet, as weak as it was, could not only hit the enemy by seizing opportunities but also by making them.

At first the Pacific Fleet was reluctant to move because of short supplies of men and aircraft. King directed many operations from Washington that CINCPAC and the Fleet did not approve. In late April, he directed Nimitz to keep two carriers in the South Pacific until further notice.

Nimitz didn't like dividing his forces, but began to agree with King when improved and reliable intelligence gave him enough information to accurately predict Japanese movements. The limited carriers could be shuttled back and forth between the South Pacific and Hawaii with confidence. (5:202)

King was reluctant to give up direct control of the Pacific Area to Nimitz. He regarded Nimitz as an unproven fleet commander and didn't trust him completely. (1:173) King tried to direct fast carrier operations from Washington but because of the vast distances and communication problems to the South Pacific, he finally relented and gave operational control to Nimitz. (5:59-60) From then on, Nimitz and King began a series of conferences that lasted the duration of the war. King was able to obtain from Nimitz the actual state of affairs of the Pacific Fleet, and pass on to him decisions made at Washington and higher. (94:376-7) This transfer of information both down and up the chain greatly increased each other's understanding and helped the strategy process immensely. As King grew more confident of Nimitz, more of the military planning and tactics were left to him even though King remained the final approving authority.

Because of King's prodding, the U.S. carriers conducted limited raids on Japanese positions. As these raids became more and more successful, U.S. confidence and morale grew. Two of King's planners in Washington came upon the idea of raiding Tokyo with B-25 bombers launched from two carriers. The famous Doolittle raid on Tokyo was designed to boost American morale and have an adverse effect upon Japanese spirits. Actually, the raid turned out to be a mistake because the two carriers involved were not available to repel an attack on Port Moresby a few days later. (3:127) After this battle, known as the battle of the Coral Sea, where

the U.S. lost the carrier Lexington and sustained major damage to the Yorktown, King became very conservative. He urged caution and wanted our remaining carriers to be used for defense only. (1:200) From that point on, Admiral Nimitz took the aggressor role and convinced Admiral King that the Navy should continue the aggressive strategy that he had initiated. With the small victory at the Coral Sea, combined with radio intelligence of Japanese intentions, Nimitz believed that the U.S. Fleet could mass forces when needed to defeat a larger but surprised Japanese Navy. King's early initiative that forced the Pacific Fleet into action enabled them to gain the confidence and aggressiveness needed that led to the victory at Midway. The battle of Midway changed the strategy in the Pacific from defensive to offensive. This strategy did not change until the Japanese surrendered on the Battleship Missouri.

KEY EVENTS - ERNEST J. KING\*

23 Nov 1878 Ernest J. King born  
6 Sep 1897 Entered U.S. Naval Academy  
7 Jun 1901 Graduated from the Naval Academy with distinction  
7 Jun 1903 Promoted to Ensign (O-1)  
7 Jun 1906 Promoted to Lieutenant (O-3), bypasses  
Lt. J.G. (O-2)  
1 Jul 1913 Promoted to Lieutenant Commander (O-4)  
30 Apr 1914 First Command, Destroyer USS Terry  
1 Jul 1917 Promoted to Commander (O-5)  
21 Sep 1918 Promoted to Captain (O-6)  
26 May 1927 Earned wings as a Navy aviator  
20 Jun 1930 Ninth command position, aircraft carrier  
USS Lexington  
Aug 1932 - May 1933 Attended Naval War College  
26 Apr 1933 Promoted to Rear Admiral (O-8), no (O-7) rank  
29 Jan 1938 Promoted to Vice Admiral (O-9)  
1 Jul 1939 Reverted to permanent rank of Rear Admiral,  
General Board  
1 Feb 1941 Promoted to Admiral (O-10), CINC, U.S. Atlantic  
Fleet  
7 Dec 1941 U.S. enters WWII  
30 Dec 1941 Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet  
18 Mar 1942 Appointed to concurrent duty as Chief of  
Naval Operations  
6 Jun 1942 Battle of Midway, turning point in the Pacific War.  
17 Dec 1944 Promoted to Fleet Admiral  
2 Sep 1945 WWII ends  
15 Dec 1945 Relieved by Fleet Admiral Nimitz  
25 Jun 1956 Ernest J. King dies

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\* 1:xxiii-xxv

## Chapter Three

### CHESTER W. NIMITZ

#### BIOGRAPHY

Chester W. Nimitz was born on 24 Feb 1985 in Fredericksburg, Texas. His father died before Chester was born, and subsequently, Grandfather Nimitz had a big influence on his youth. Grandfather Nimitz had been in the Merchant Marine and passed on his love of the sea to Chester. Chester's mother married uncle William Nimitz and thus, the family acquired a new father without a change of name. They owned and lived in a hotel called the Steamboat Hotel, in Fredericksburg. It had a marquee shaped like the bow of a ship. In 1900, at the age of 15, Chester worked in the hotel and had no real hope of any opportunity past high school. But that summer, two new West Point graduates happened to stay in the Nimitz's hotel. They so impressed Chester with their military bearing, worldly sophistication, and new uniforms that he decided to try for an appointment. He saw a chance to receive an education and launch a career without costing his family anything. The appointment to West Point had already been filled in his district but there was an opening to the Naval Academy. Nimitz applied, took all the exams, and was accepted to the Class of 1905. He entered class in Sep 1901 at the age of 16. (6:23-29)

Chester Nimitz entered the Naval Academy during a period of Navy renaissance. Congress had authorized the building of at least one battleship per year and had expanded Navy training. The Class of 1905, with

131 cadets, was the largest since the founding of the school. Many future World War II naval leaders attended the Academy with Nimitz: among them were Bill Halsey, Harold Stark, Husband Kimmel, Royal E. Ingersoll, Robert Ghormley, Frank Jack Fletcher, Raymond A. Spruance, John Towers, Milo Draemel, John S. McCain, Aubrey Fitch, Thomas Kinkaid, William Brown, and R. Kelly Turner. Because of the small class size, everyone knew everyone else. Thus, commanders of World War II were not strangers to each other when war broke out. Sixteen members of his class made rear admiral or better. Chester graduated 7th overall in achievement out of 114 graduates. The class graduated in January 1905 instead of June because the Navy needed new officers badly. (6:49-55)

Nimitz entered the Navy as a midshipman, eligible for commission to ensign two years later. He was first assigned to the new battleship Ohio and a year later transferred to the cruiser Baltimore; both ships were stationed in the Orient. He assumed command of the gunboat Panay when he received his commission to ensign in Jan 1907. Later that year, in July, he assumed command of the out-of-commission destroyer Decatur and was ordered to get it in commission. He inadvertently ran it aground and received a public reprimand for it. However, this minor setback did not seem to hurt his career and he made all subsequent promotions on time. (6:56-61)

Nimitz's naval career began to broaden at this point. He was assigned to four consecutive submarines, commanding the last. He became a recognized authority in diesel engines and supervised the installation of two engines into the newly built oiler Maumee. His expertise as a staff officer was recognized early as various high ranking officers used him as aide, chief of staff, and executive officer. The Navy assigned him to

build the submarine base at Pearl Harbor, sent him to attend the Naval War College, and had him organize the Navy ROTC unit at the University of California at Berkeley. The Navy then assigned him to a series of high level command positions that gave him the needed experience that became so valuable for fighting the war. He commanded Submarine Division Twenty, the San Diego Destroyer Base, the Heavy Cruiser Augusta, Cruiser Division Two, Battleship Division One and Task Force Seven. When war broke out, Rear Admiral Nimitz was chief of the Bureau of Navigation. This was the personnel department at which he learned the capabilities and personalities of many of the high ranking navy leaders. (6)

Chester W. Nimitz had worked his way to the top of his profession. He was respected for his intelligence, experience, and hard-working nature. Subordinates and superiors alike looked to him for guidance and support. He was definitely a people-oriented person. His courteous, quiet, unruffled nature instilled confidence in his men while leaving no doubt who was in charge. (7:11) This highly respected officer was well suited for the job of CINCPAC when the Navy reorganized after Pearl Harbor. He was able to mold his men into one of the most effective military fighting teams in history. This great warrior played a large part in the strategy to defeat Japan.

#### NIMITZ AND PACIFIC MILITARY STRATEGY

The damage at Pearl Harbor dismayed the newly arrived commander of the Pacific Navy. All of America's first line Pacific battleships including Nimitz's old flag ship, the Arizona, had been either sunk or badly damaged. Luckily no aircraft carriers had been in port. The scales had been tipped, giving the Japanese a tremendous advantage. They maintained

a force of 10 aircraft carriers, 12 battleships and 25 cruisers. This, compared to our 4 aircraft carriers and 15 cruisers, was a massive opposing force. (1:174) Conventional naval strategy would have been to mass the Pacific fleet at vital points to hit the Japanese where we had a local advantage. But the first orders from Washington were completely defensive in nature. Nimitz was ordered to maintain the security of Hawaii and protect the lines of communication to Samoa and Australia. Later additional orders extended the protection to Midway while preserving the fleet. (5:19)

Admiral Nimitz's assessment of the Navy's problems was really a look at the limiting factors to strategy formulation. The economic environment of America entering a two front war with limited shipping and manpower, restricted the traditional naval strategy of hitting the enemy quickly. The massive buildup of Japanese forces and swift conquests over a vast ocean further complicated the environment. While the public and domestic politicians, including President Roosevelt, clamored for action, the Navy had no choice but to remain defensive for the first few months.

As public opinion mounted and our allies put pressure on us to act, the Navy relented to conduct nuisance raids on Japanese positions. These raids on the Gilberts and Marshalls were somewhat important because we increased American and Navy morale while inflicting damage on the Japanese that limited the extent of their conquests. Realistically, these raids did not hurt the Japanese much, although they put our limited carrier forces in jeopardy. This is clearly a case where strategy is chosen because of purely political reasons and not on sound military principles of war.

Another case of poor strategy was the raid on Tokyo. Washington planners came up with the plan to launch B-25s from two aircraft carriers

for an attack on Tokyo. This, too, was not sound military judgment because it went against planned strategy. At the same time, damage expectancy was low and loss rates were expected to be high. Admiral Nimitz had been against the raid from the beginning, but Washington planners won out. The raid did help U.S. morale while demoralizing the Japanese; and it also forced the Japanese to keep more of their forces in reserve near Japan rather than deployed for offensive action. The greatest benefit of the Tokyo raid was the wealth of radio intelligence collected from the large amount of encrypted radio orders sent by Tokyo to the pursuit forces. Accuracy of past intelligence was verified. This meant that for the first time we could rely with confidence on our intelligence-collecting ability.

(5:81)

Intelligence collection and analysis soon became the deciding factor that gave the Navy the strategic advantage in the Pacific. This was the factor that enabled the U.S. Navy to take advantage of Japanese fleet movements even though U.S. forces were outnumbered. At first, we gained little information from intercepted encrypted Japanese radio messages. But gradually our code breakers, working day and night, figured out the codes and began putting the pieces together. The Japanese complicated matters by changing their codes on the first of each month so that by the time we had a code broken, it wasn't used anymore. For some unknown reason, the Japanese failed to change their code on 1 April 1942 and again on 1 May 1942. (5:75-76) CINCPAC intelligence officers had broken this code in early April, giving Admiral Nimitz the priceless advantage of knowing enemy intentions. (7:13)

Up until April, Nimitz believed that the Pacific fleet was too small to protect the Southwest Pacific lines of communication and to defend

Hawaii while conducting raids on Japanese positions. He had been forced by Washington into conducting the raids. But now with this new information, he could confidently carry out the raids and protect Hawaii by shuffling his forces between the two areas. This newly acquired information gave Nimitz the latitude to take the offensive. When Nimitz learned of Japanese intentions to take Port Moresby, he convinced Admiral King to commit all available U.S. forces to oppose the invading force. (The Tokyo raiders were not included because they were too far north to make it to the Coral Sea in time.) This was not a desperation defensive move as many historians claim. Admiral Nimitz meant it to be much more. He wanted to draw the Japanese into battle under our own circumstances, not theirs. It was a calculated battle risk. We knew their intentions while they knew little of ours. Nimitz was much more aggressive than people thought. It was time to take the initiative away from the Japanese. (5:85-86)

The battle of the Coral Sea was not a total victory for the U.S. Navy. The losses were about equal, but we did stem the Japanese movement for the first time. Our plans failed because the Japanese did not commit the bulk of their carriers as we had expected. Also, this was the first sea battle in history in which opposing naval vessels were never close enough to engage in battle. The entire battle was fought by naval aviation. (5:87)

Our losses at the battle of the Coral Sea left the Navy with two operational carriers and one damaged one. Washington planners became very conservative and wanted our carriers to be tied to land-based forces and used in a defensive role only. Nimitz made a new plea to King for more planes to build up both a defensive and offensive force. But the

Army held fast and refused to take resources away from the Atlantic theater.

Admiral King's planners were convinced that our forces must remain in the South Pacific. They clearly saw the threat there. But Pacific Fleet Intelligence learned that the enemy's plan was not to strike again in the South Pacific but move across Central Pacific and take Midway Island. Nimitz convinced King of the threat and pulled all available carriers back to Pearl Harbor to thwart the coming attack at Midway. Nimitz had such complete confidence in radio intelligence that he decided to deceive the Japanese. He allowed Task Force 16, composed of the carriers Enterprise and Hornet to be sighted by the Japanese in the South Pacific on their return to Hawaii. Also by radio deception, Nimitz led the Japanese to believe that the carriers had remained in the South Pacific. The Japanese were completely surprised at Midway when our entire three-carrier force showed up. They had no idea that the U.S. knew about the battle. (5:152-162)

Fleet intelligence was so good that it predicted when and how many ships would attack Midway. It predicted how many aircraft were involved and the actual fleet departure time from Saipan and arrival time at Midway. (5:174-5) The Japanese objective was to surprise Midway and then entrap the Pacific Fleet as it sortied to relieve Midway. But because of our advanced warning, we were able to avoid detection and strike the heavier blow. (5:181)

The Battle of Midway was the turning point in the war. It was the first decisive defeat suffered by the Japanese Navy in 350 years. It put an end to Japanese offensive action and gave the U.S. the strategic advantage for the first time since the war started. (4:380) It was a

strategic and tactical victory of immense proportions. U.S. grand strategy changed quickly from a defensive posture to that of taking the initiative. Washington planners saw the advantage and began funneling supplies and aircraft to the Pacific. America had started prosecuting the war.

#### NIMITZ AND GRAND STRATEGY

The strategy process is not a one way street that flows from top to bottom. Actions by commanders and tactical victories or blunders change the direction of wars and thus change grand strategy. National objectives are much harder to change and therefore remain more stable in the long run. The previous section mentioned the unbelievable victory at Midway which changed U.S. grand strategy on a scale not seen before.

Washington planners saw the light and the importance of the early victory and began funneling supplies westward. They had planned on defeating Japan after Germany, but no one ever guessed that the Navy would be on the offensive so quickly. This was the first step in the departure of the Americans from the basic Anglo-American strategy agreement, dating back to early 1941 and ratified in December 1941 at the Arcadia Conferences. (2:7) From the beginning, the U.S. Navy had wanted to fight the Japanese in the Pacific, but had been restricted by other factors.

Admiral Nimitz had an important role in this strategy shift by the American planners. The army actually controlled the course of grand strategy from Washington because of its control over the logistics support to all theaters. It had the President's ear and thus kept the Pacific theater a defensive one. Admiral King and his planning staff carried out this defensive strategy by restricting and regulating Nimitz and his Pacific planners. King ordered Nimitz to send the Pacific Fleet

into the South Pacific area to defend the lines of communication and conduct nuisance raids. Nimitz was reluctant at first because of the short supplies of men and aircraft to do the job. But as Pacific intelligence operations became more reliable, Nimitz saw the opportunity to hit the Japanese very hard and still placate Washington by "remaining defensive." After the battle of the Coral Sea, Nimitz became the aggressor. He moved the Pacific Fleet without approval from Admiral King in Washington. He was almost defiant in his view of how the Pacific Fleet should be used. Nimitz was able to convince Admiral King of the upcoming Midway attack and the strategy for it. He alone was able to change the course of the war.

In actual practice, King and Nimitz devised much of the strategy of the war. Their close dialogue included several radio dispatches a day, letters, exchange of representatives and periodic meetings throughout the war. They met a total of 18 times, usually in San Francisco, concerning the strategy of the war. (1:197) Information flowed up and down the chain of command. King understood the problems at the fleet level and Nimitz understood the problems in Washington concerning the entire war effort. Not only did King rely on Nimitz's ability to conduct the war, he also respected his views on strategy and took them back to Washington to affect the way the war was fought.

KEY EVENTS - CHESTER W. NIMITZ (6)

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 24 Feb 1885 | Chester W. Nimitz born                                    |
| Sep 1901    | Entered U.S. Naval Academy                                |
| Jan 1905    | Graduated from Naval Academy                              |
| Jan 1907    | Promoted to Ensign (O-1)                                  |
| Jan 1907    | First Command, Gunboat Panay                              |
| Jan 1909    | Promoted to Lieutenant (O-3), by-passes<br>Lt. J.G. (O-2) |
| Jul 1917    | Promoted to Lieutenant Commander (O-4)                    |
| Jun 1920    | Built submarine base at Pearl Harbor                      |
| Jul 1921    | Promoted to Commander (O-5)                               |
| Aug 1922    | Attended Naval War College                                |
| Jun 1927    | Promoted to Captain (O-6)                                 |
| Jun 1929    | Commander Submarine Division Twenty                       |
| Jun 1931    | Commander San Diego Destroyer Base                        |
| Oct 1933    | Commander Heavy Cruiser Augusta                           |
| Jun 1938    | Promoted to Rear Admiral (O-8), no (O-7) rank             |
| Jul 1938    | Commander Cruiser Division Two                            |
| Sep 1938    | Commander Battleship Division One,<br>Flag Ship Arizona   |
| Jan 1939    | Commander Task Force Seven                                |
| Jun 1939    | Chief, Bureau of Navigation                               |
| 31 Dec 1941 | Promoted to Admiral (O-10)                                |
| 31 Dec 1941 | Commander of Pacific Fleet (CINCPAC)                      |
| 30 Mar 1942 | Commander of Pacific Ocean Area (CINCPAO)                 |
| 19 Dec 1944 | Promoted to Fleet Admiral                                 |
| 15 Dec 1945 | Chief of Naval Operations (CNO)                           |
| 20 Feb 1966 | Chester W. Nimitz dies                                    |

## Chapter Four

### CONCLUSION

In almost anything we do, planning is the key to success. In the military when we speak of planning, we are usually talking about strategy. Strategy formulation is a very complex, dynamic process. In simple terms, its purpose is to develop a plan of action to accomplish objectives. Throughout history, strategy has often spelled the difference between winning and losing. By studying the past we are better able to address the present. Future strategy must be weighed by the lessons from the past. The contributions of Admirals King and Nimitz in World War II give us just a sample of the insight needed for future strategy formulation. To conclude, this paper will now define the steps of the strategy process and then relate specific examples to show what part King and Nimitz played in the strategy process.

The strategy process can be broken down into four steps. These steps include the determination of national objectives, grand strategy, military strategy, and battlefield strategy. The first step is assessment of national objectives. They form the foundation of the strategy process because without a clear cut objective it is difficult to devise a proper plan of action. The second step, determining grand strategy, includes coordinating the development and use of the instruments of national power. These instruments include economic, political, and military factors. At the grand strategy level, the coordination and interface between the

military and nonmilitary sectors of society takes place. (8:9-10) Military strategy, one of the instruments of national power, becomes the third step in the process. It is defined as coordinating the development, deployment, and employment of military forces to achieve national security objectives. (8:10) And finally, battlefield strategy, the fourth step, is commonly known as tactics. It is defined as the battlefield employment of military forces to achieve national security objectives. (8:11) There are a number of external factors that limit the options available to the strategist. These factors include domestic and international politics, economics, geography, culture, technology, enemy threat, and doctrine of the time. All of these factors must be considered when analyzing strategy.

Nimitz and King developed the most effective strategic decision-making arrangement the world had ever seen. Although very different in personality and background, they developed a friendship based on respect for each other's abilities, integrity and devotion to duty. (6:8) King, dedicated, blunt, and often caustic of speech, devised and developed Navy grand strategy that brought about the defeat of Japan. Nimitz, on the other hand, was courteous, quiet, and unruffled. He shared King's dedication, strategic instinct, and ability to judge men while inspiring confidence in his men. Neither man left any doubt as to who was running the show. Even though each man worked at different levels in the strategy process, they affected each other's decisions continuously.

Admiral King influenced Pacific grand strategy more than any other person. He was one of the most influential links between the military and nonmilitary sectors of our society. He constantly badgered Congress for the need to mass produce war goods. He convinced other military men

and heads of state that defense in the Pacific should not be static. His major obstacle was the problem of extremely limited resources of ships and planes within the U.S. Fleet. The problem developed because of the international and domestic politics of defeating Germany first and the Army's reluctance to allocate resources away from the Atlantic theater. Although he failed in getting the resources he needed initially, he was able to insure that the Pacific received sufficient supplies and equipment to go on the offensive. (3:725) On the guise of being on the defensive, King initiated attacks on Japanese positions that led to the unexpected victory at Midway. His grand strategy outsmarted or by-passed the official strategy that had been adopted by President Roosevelt, the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The victory at Midway changed the direction of the Pacific War.

King's effect on military strategy was also important. He initiated the action by ordering the Pacific Fleet into activity over CINCPAC's objections. He regarded Nimitz as an unproven commander and was not ready to trust him completely. Nimitz and his planners were reluctant to act because the U.S. Fleet was numerically inferior to the Japanese. But as Nimitz gained confidence in hitting the enemy when and where he wanted, he became the aggressor while Admiral King backed off and urged restraint. King's strategy of hitting offensively at the Japanese was sound, as was his strategy of protecting the lines of communication between Hawaii and Australia. But the random nuisance raids and the raid on Tokyo did little to implement that strategy while putting priceless carriers into jeopardy. Yet, the reason he implemented the latter strategy was purely political, to show the country that the Navy was acting and to improve U.S. and Navy

morale. The reasons for military actions got foggy then as they do today.

Admiral Nimitz, on the other hand, as CINCPAC/CINCPOA, contributed more to the military strategy formulation. His reluctance to act changed quickly when he realized the importance of the decrypted Japanese radio messages. He convinced King of the massive concentration of power for the battle of the Coral Sea. After the battle, King became very cautious and wanted to use the Fleet defensively, but Nimitz persevered. He again convinced King of the strategy to employ at Midway, and the victory is now history. The victory itself was important because of the decapitation of the Japanese Navy, but more importantly, it changed the course of the war. Grand strategy shifted away from the Germany first principle and a defensive posture in the Pacific to an equally important one in both theaters.

Admiral Nimitz also affected grand strategy indirectly by way of Admiral King. Early message exchange and meetings set the precedence for the rest of the war. They respected each other's judgment and were sensitive to each other's prerogatives. Their communications paint a clear picture that they were aware that their decisions would affect the course of the war and American lives. They carefully and deliberately thought out their decisions. (1:201-202) Even though their styles were much different, they were both men of integrity and keen intelligence. They both stressed simplicity and directness yet dealt daily with complex organizations and strategy. While King had little of Nimitz's natural ability to deal with people, both were born strategists and organizers. They knew how to get things done.

Ideally, grand strategy, designed to support national objectives, determines military strategy and tactics. This is the normal concept

used to determine long range planning. But real world constraints and inputs change the entire process and make it very dynamic. For example, limited resources and political realities determined initial World War II grand strategy. Then the rapidly changing world situation, political facts of life, and military needs prevented or changed military strategy. In the middle of this turmoil is the dominant effect that military great warriors have on this entire process. From their grand strategy decisions in Washington to their military decisions at the Fleet level and tactical decisions on the battle field, their inputs greatly affect the strategy process. In fact, a military victory such as Midway can drastically change the direction of a war, and in this case, did.

Admirals King and Nimitz provided the important strategic inputs that brought about the defeat of Japan. Their close cooperation was essential for effective information transfer. Their military training gave them the wisdom to make the strategic decisions required of them. And their courage and perseverance to use the newly found information brought about victory. In the end, the United States was still required to fight and win. Great warriors such as King and Nimitz upheld the finest tradition of America's military profession.

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